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DEPARTMENT FOR OES/IHA AND WHA
USAID/CH/HIDN FOR CHRIS THOMAS

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SUBJECT: LOW KEY RECOGNITION FOR AFRICA MALARIA DAY IN
CANADA

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¶1. Foreign Ministry officials advised that Canada planned no nationwide public events for Africa Malaria Day beyond an April 17 announcement by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) of a C\$20 million (from the FY 2007 budget) donation to the Canadian Red Cross for bednets in Africa and a statement recognizing the occasion on the CIDA website. The funding announced on the 17th comes in addition to C\$46.3 million already committed for malaria work, mostly in Africa. Included in the C\$46.3 million is C\$26 million previously given through the Canadian Red Cross for malaria work in Africa.

¶2. There were, however, commemorative events in Toronto, where Mayor David Miller proclaimed it Africa Malaria Day in the city, and asserted that Toronto was the first Canadian city so to recognize the day. In a City Hall event, Miller welcomed soon-to-be ex-MP Belinda Stronach and other leaders in the grassroots "Spread the Net" Campaign to raise funds for mosquito nets in partnership with UNICEF.

¶3. Press commentary seemed relatively limited, covering either the Toronto angle or focusing on the relative size of the federal government's contributions to fight malaria globally and in Africa specifically. One local academic called the Canadian response "pathetic," and in an editorial published April 24 in the Canadian Medical Association Journal called the government "indolent" and urged it to "take a hint from the United States" where the President's Malaria initiative "is getting rave reviews, because it transparently focuses on interventions that work in a small number of countries."

¶4. Text of the CIDA statement, posted on April 25, follows:

A child dies of malaria every 30 seconds.

Today is Africa Malaria Day - a day chosen to commemorate and bring attention to a preventable disease that kills over one million people a year. More than 900,000 of these deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Government of Canada is committed to the fight against malaria. Working with partners such as the Canadian Red Cross and UNICEF, we help distribute life-saving bednets to African families. In addition to this successful prevention method, new and innovative approaches to frontline malaria treatment - such as the deployment of community health workers to diagnose and deliver effective medications will help in the fight against malaria.

On April 17, Canada announced an additional \$20 million to the Canadian Red Cross to build on our successful

partnership. A single bednet that costs just \$7 can save a life in Africa. The Canadian Red Cross estimates that this new bednet program alone will save up to 88,000 people in Africa, mostly children, who would otherwise die from malaria. Overall, including this new distribution program, Canada's New Government will have enabled the distribution of over six million long-lasting insecticide-treated nets.

Canadians can be proud of these efforts. Their life-saving impact is only part of the story. They also help ensure that children are well enough to go to school and learn, and that women and men are healthy enough to work and care for their families.

Canada's New Government also supports malaria prevention and treatment efforts through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, to which Canada has provided almost \$530 million, of which about 24 percent is to fight malaria.

These new initiatives and commitment to this pressing issue will help decrease the suffering and death caused by malaria.

The Honourable Josee Verner
QThe Honourable Josee Verner
Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for La Francophonie and Official Languages

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